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... category in 2008.

Photo: Helen Nezdropa

... host **Tony Jones** brought the pair together on Tuesday night, following the publication of Plimer's book, *Heaven and Earth*, in Britain. As the debate became heated, Plimer began objecting to Monbiot's interjections, declaring it was "the height of bad manners to interrupt" and that the journalist was "showing ill breeding". Monbiot responded: "It's the height of bad manners to lie on national television about something that you know to be plain wrong."

BRONNIE'S BATHTIME

Journalists and Government types have been on high alert in expectation of the new Opposition Leader, **Tony Abbott's** first public clanger since he took over from the comparatively measured **Malcolm Turnbull**. Yesterday, during a Liberal fund-raiser in Sydney, Abbott appeared to give them what they have been waiting for while being quizzed over the decision to appoint a "back to the future" shadow cabinet which included **Bronwyn Bishop**. The emcee, Channel Seven news anchor **Samantha Armytage**, noted that Bishop was the aged care minister at the time of the infamous "kerosene baths" scandal at Riverside Nursing Home in Victoria, to which Abbott replied: "But can I say this about that? I mean, Bronwyn stopped it – Bronwyn didn't fill the bath, Bronwyn stopped the bath being filled." Cue uncomfortable laughter from the audience. The Minister for Ageing, **Justine Elliott**, didn't see the funny side. "It is pretty clear that Mr Abbott has little or no respect for older Australians," she declared.

BRA-BOTHER

Things are going from bad to worse for Bra-boy **Jai Abberton**, who is expected to be in Waverley Local Court this morning to face larceny charges after he allegedly stole $400 from a Maroubra pub, the Sands Hotel. The brother of big wave surfer **Koby Abberton**, Jai was sentenced to eight months' jail in October for breaching a good behaviour bond by assaulting a police officer.

GOT A TIP?

Contact diary@smh.com.au or 9282 2179

WHAT'S ON TODAY

- Twentieth anniversary of the first full-length episode *The Simpsons*
- Screen Actors Guild Awards
- Climate Action Network rall Martin Place
- Bureau of Statistics report c public sector employment a earnings released

STAY IN TOUCH . . .

WITH THE GAYLIES

THE Climate Change Minister, **Penny Wong**, has been bumped off the annual list of the 25 most influential gay and lesbian Australians. The third annual "Gaylies", announced today, includes activists, singers, a cheerleader and politicians, but for the first time it includes neither the senator nor, for that matter, the *Herald* journalist **David Marr**. Both, in fact, were even beaten by a deceased poet, **Dorothy Porter**, on the list of those "shining a spotlight on people and issues" of the year. "The truth has caught up with me," Marr conceded yesterday. "But if Penny Wong is not on that list, then the list is rubbish." Wong, who is in Copenhagen for the climate change conference, could not be reached for comment. But the co-founder of the website Same Same, **Tim Duggan**, said the list was not definitive and was often finalised after fierce debate among judges. "There's no doubting that [Wong] is influential, but the consensus of the judging panel was that over the past 12 months maybe she hasn't done as much as we were hoping [she would] do." Ouch. Better news for the Greens leader, **Bob Brown**, and the former High Court justice **Michael Kirby**, who can now claim three years from three. Others from the class of 2009 include the Choir of Hard Knocks creator, **Jonathan Welch**, the Oscar-winning filmmaker Adam Elliot, the former Australian Medical Association president **Kerryn Phelps**, the Labor senator **Louise Pratt** and the Penrith Panthers cheerleader **Aaron Neich**.

Photo: Reuters/Bob Strong

WITH WORDS THAT LAST

WE'RE about to leave the noughties, but not all of the words born in the past decade will necessarily be coming with us, a quick review shows. Some of the Maquarie Dictionary's words of the year for 2006 still stack up pretty well: the inaugural list introduced "affluenza", "muffin top" and "cyberstalking" into our official lexicon. "Cyberathlete" didn't fare as well as "cyber cheating" from 2007's list, which also gave us "carbon footprint" and "infomania". "Pod slurping", referring to the act of downloading large quantities of computer data to a portable memory device, was named the top word of that year. It has been overshadowed by the "toxic debt" that topped 2008 – in more ways than one. Some words succumbed to more popular alternatives: "arse antlers" was no match for "tramp stamp" when referring to a lower back tattoo. Others, like "climate porn" or "uber-veillance" might have not yet reached their peak. There have been some memorable additions internationally as well. The author and blogger Adam Jacot de Boinod noted New York gave us the "cuddle puddle" in 2002 to describe a bunch of exhausted ravers, the same year that Britain takes credit for "trout pout" for botoxed lips. Of the Australian words to make it to the world-wide list of the best of the decade, as quoted in the *Guardian*, we offered up "barbecue stopper" in 2002 to describe an important electoral issue, "dog-whistle politics" for views heard only by supporters, and "flashpackers" for comfortable but intrepid travellers.

WITH ALL EYES ON REGGIE

BIG BROTHER contestants have been associated with everything from nightclubs to herpes awareness campaigns, but now you can add bionic eyes to the list. The Centre for Eye Research Australia has announced that the winner of the 2003 series, Regina Sorenson, pictured, "known to many as 'Reggie' Bird", was excited about the $42 million cash injection the centre received from the Federal Government to develop the technology. At 35 Sorensen has retinitis pigmentosa, a degenerative disease that causes sufferers to gradually lose their peripheral vision. "If my vision continues to deteriorate, it could change my life," she said.

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